



HB 123 – Vehicle Laws – HOV Lanes – Plug-In Electric Drive Vehicles

Testimony before

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 2, 2023

Position: Favorable

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, Sponsor Fraser-Hidalgo and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB 123**, which will authorize the use of HOV lanes for plug-in vehicles. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members).

HOV lanes for passenger vehicles were developed as early as the 1970s to manage roadways and reduce fuel consumption by providing a dedicated lane for carpoolers. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments authorized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to restrict Federal Highway Administration HOV lane funds to those states federally mandated to reduce air pollution and allowed these states to include HOV lanes in their state implementation plans. Additional legislation enacted in 2005, allowed EPA to define single occupant low emission and energy-efficient vehicles permission to use HOV lanes. Currently, plug-in vehicles and alternative fuel vehicles may use free or discounted access to HOV lanes. State interpretation of this authorization varies. This legislation will encourage the use of plug-in electric vehicles, by providing access to these HOV lanes with no restrictions on number of riders.

The climate crisis can be survived if we keep our promises and translate our commitments into swift action that delivers on expectations. HB 123 is a pragmatic and effective step that exemplifies the leadership and political will required. It provides incentive for citizens to take action.

We urge a favorable report on HB 123.

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